

Women's empowerment⁹



Left: Women are still the backbone of rural life in India, with significant contributions in household work, agriculture and resource management; and more recently, in politics and as drivers of social change.

Middle: Members of Maati Sangathan in Sarmoli, Uttarakhand.

Right: Pushpa, a member of Maati, weaving an 'aasan', a product made from locally procured sheep wool.

Maati in Sarmoli, Uttarakhand is a collective of about 20 women that first came together as a response to domestic violence. They have since grown into a living example of direct democracy, through participation in local politics, in management of their forest and water resources, in agriculture based on seed diversity and in complementing their livelihoods with low-impact tourism based on homestays.

At the other end of the scale is **Kudumbashree**, a mammoth state-led initiative in Kerala that attempts to empower women through a decentralized governance structure from the bottom up (self, neighbourhood, district); and training, networking and marketing for micro-enterprise set-ups that produce goods locally. While the programme has been exemplary in empowering women, challenges remain in ensuring local sourcing of raw materials and local consumption of products.



Left to right: A cloth-weaver in Thiruvananthapuram district and a women's group of a Nutrimix (supplementary food) production unit in Kochi, part of the Kudumbashree network.